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ABSTRACT

This paper takes issue with the popular view comparing educational leadership with industrial management, suggesting that educational leaders today must go beyond the fine tuning and monitoring of existing instructional programs; instead, the primary task of educational leadership during the rest of the century will be nothing less than social reconstruction. This task calls for the following leadership requirements: (1) more leadership demonstrated through technical competence in teaching, learning, and curriculum; (2) more leadership with clarity of purpose and commitment to ideals for a better society; and (3) more leadership with deep and rooted attachments to the traditional values of public education. After a brief discussion of each of these requirements, the summary states that leaders must resist the growing clamor of reactionaries--often posing as reformers--who would centralize, homogenize, and take control of public education, parents, and students alike. (TE)

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LEADERSHIP FOR QUALITY INSTRUCTION:

LOOKING TOWARD THE 21st CENTURY

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Leadership for quality instruction presumes more than change,
more than response to pressures, more than instructional "fine
tuning", or monitoring for compliance while weeding out
incompetence—as important as all of these may be! We need to be
reminded, as new emphasis is placed on leadership for excellence
in our schools, that change is a consequence of many events, and
has no special merit of its own. Pressures that call for
responses to patterns of growth, technological developments, or
even neo-reactionary ideologies are realities with which
leadership must cope. But such responsive leadership has no
special claim to virtue. How leaders respond is the crucial
consideration. The fine tuning and monitoring of instructional
programs, once installed, presumes upon the scarce resources of
leadership with essentially stultifying effects. For to "fine
tune" what is already in place signals an end to creative
endeavors. To monitor is important for maintaining and
preserving, but it is not leading. Even the most obviously
significant task of weeding out incompetence is but a disguise for

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those reluctant to lead, for it concentrates on aberrations, substitutes fear for creativity, and leaves little time, energy or opportunity for genuine leadership.

II. What Then Is Required?

It is easier to warn of traps, dead-ends and diversions for leaders than to discover the essence of fine leadership. Our politicians, industrialists, and bureaucrats would seemingly have our educational leaders follow in their footsteps, concerning themselves with only symptoms, crises and quarterly reports. But instructional leadership is special!! In a society where people rely so heavily for so many years on formal schooling for growth and development, socialization and economic opportunity, leadership for instruction is not simple industrial management.

The best leadership theory and research has provided useful concepts to guide us in thinking about instructional leaders. We know about charisma and no longer worship there. We know about human relations and the "consideration dimension" as pervasive requirements. We know leaders must be initiating, risk-taking, delegating, motivating, communicating, decision making, and creative in their thinking. We have even described styles and patterns of leadership that relate to school effectiveness, morale and innovation. Parenthetically, it is important to be reminded, perhaps, that leadership for public elementary and secondary education is a massive endeavor. Selecting for, cultivating and utilizing leadership potential among 2.5 million educators in 16,000 communities and over 100,000 individual schools is a

monumental task. We do it surprisingly well even as we are constantly maligned as "educationists" and "bureaucrats."

Still, the leadership we have is much like that described a moment ago as responsive and monitoring, rather than creative and dynamic. Such leadership has been effective in the past, but may be without much effect in the present and the future. As the complexities of rapidly changing social, economic and demographic realities rise above us, they form huge nuclear-like mushroom clouds that spread across the land with dangerous fallout effects. Schools and family units are most directly affected and find ways to survive. But how do we sustain and develop still higher quality educational programs under such conditions? Do we dare reconsider social reconstruction as a task of educational leadership?

Do we dare continue to leave the fate of our children and society to the industrialists, scientists, and politicians?

III. Special Leadership Requirements

With only a very cloudy, unpolished crystal ball at my disposal, let me suggest a few special requirements for instructional leadership for the 21st century. We need:

- (1) More leadership demonstrated through technical competence in teaching, learning and curriculum;
- (2) More leadership with clarity of purpose and commitment to ideals for a better society;
- (3) More leadership with deep and rooted attachments to the traditional values of public education.

A few words about each of these requirements:

Leadership Based on Technical Competence

We who try to exercise leadership for quality education should take courage in knowing our craft—even while we admit many failings. Ours is the second oldest profession. Five thousand years of formal education provide an enormous body of wisdom about teaching and learning that is widely shared by outstanding teachers, administrators, supervisors, and even college professors of education.

The leadership we need will recognize fads, frivolous innovations, and reactionary "back to basics" movements for what they are, and will not lend them willing support. But even more importantly, the wisdom of our field needs to be better catalogued, so each of us can recognize the competencies we offer, while appreciating those of our colleagues.

We need to form leadership teams that support individual efforts without yielding to special interests and frivolous intruders.

Our leaders need to be more adamant about effective teaching practices. We should insist that individual differences, alternative learning modes, and differentiated needs are realities, not frills. We need to assert that students have inalienable rights, and among these is the right to have their learning needs served well.

Our leaders for the 21st century should persist in promoting collegial working relations among parents, teachers,

administrators and supervisors, because we know that they all have competencies that are needed to assure high quality learning and they must be involved.

Our leaders must promote continuing staff, curriculum and materials development as high priorities instead of peripheral concerns. To neglect these developmental tasks is to sacrifice all hope for quality education.

Purpose and Commitment to Ideals

Ideals are among the most powerful of tools for leadership. Our leadership needs greater clarity of purpose with ideals as the beacon lights by which we stay the course when chaos reigns.

Our leaders need to be clear that children and youth are our sacred trust.

Our leaders need to know and emulate respect for the individual and demonstrate determination to serve all segments of our society.

Above all, our leaders need to view the educational enterprise as open to unlimited productivity. We have only begun to learn about teaching and learning. The improvability of all human endeavors through education should be our faith.

Leadership Roots in Traditional Values

To worship the present and the future, exaggerating the value of newness is a tragic flaw in western industrial societies. The present has meaning when we know of its origins and root system.

The future is managed and controlled to serve us well when given direction by the present and the past. It takes at least two points in time to project a line into the future—a past and a present.

Our leaders need to clearly understand the enduring contributions of the public school systems of the world, pioneered largely in the U.S. and Europe. Universal education remains, I think, an imperative for all civilizations. Free public education, at all levels for all people of all ages is still a dream. Years of experience with faulty yet valiant efforts to extend educational opportunities to all are universally reassuring. Even a hard-headed industrial executive recognizes the power of education above all else in making the Work of the World Bank effective.

Local control of education continues to elude most of the world. Yet where has it failed? The bureaucratic monstrosities of the French, British and German systems of elitism have largely been replaced by more egalitarian systems. But the U.S. system continues to amaze the world with 16,000 school communities and 100,000 schools, coordinated to be sure by a common language, similar texts, and extensive networking of professionals through numerous associations.

The current drive for state-wide and national uniformity can be defeated, I hope, in the interests of both quality and diversity. The neo-reactionaries plead for "choice" in education through federal funding, but in fact hope to subsidize offerings of religious indoctrination. The concept of choice, promoted

widely through media advertising for patent medicines, has little validity to encourage its adoption in education.

Summary

Leadership is more important than ever to the future of public education and the welfare of our society. We need a new brand of more aggressive yet more rooted leadership and our industrial models have little to offer.

Leadership for public schools must rely more on technical competence, more on ideals, and more on values. But above all, leaders must be sensitive and resistant to the growing clamor of reactionaries—often posing as reformers—who would centralize, homogenize, and take control of public education, making puppets of educators, parents and students alike. 1984 has come and gone!